

How to Make a Referral to the Exceptional Children Preschool Program

The Exceptional Children Preschool Program is responsible for conducting screenings and evaluations for 3, 4 and pre-kindergarten 5 year old children in North Carolina. This responsibility is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and is called CHILD FIND. Federal and state money is set aside for this purpose to assure that screenings and evaluations are free to all families.

If you are concerned about your child's development and want to request a screening and/or evaluation, you will need to:

- Call the [Exceptional Children Preschool Coordinator](#) in your local school district to set up an appointment for a developmental screening.
- In most cases, you will need to supply the following information during the referral process:
 - Proof that you live in the school district area (e.g., electric bill mailed to you at your address),
 - Proof that your child is at least 3 years of age (e.g., birth certificate).

Then...

- A formal referral, which is typically completed with you after the screening process, is written to request further evaluation.
- The screening information will then allow the team to make informed decisions about the appropriate follow-up assessments and information needed to determine eligibility for services. During the referral process, the preschool team will:
 - Learn about your concerns and priorities as a family,
 - Identify your child's current strengths,
 - Discuss areas in which your child needs support ,
 - Review important information such as (*Parents can assist in this process by bringing any of the below mentioned information to the referral meeting.*):
 - Most recent Well Baby Check Ups
 - Previous evaluations by other professionals
 - Previous interventions by other service providers
 - Document Developmental and Social History of your child
- If needed, a follow-up assessment may be scheduled by the school system Preschool Exceptional Children staff. Sometimes it is only necessary to have a limited follow-up assessment by one professional, at other times a more comprehensive assessment may be required by a team of professionals. There are specific requirements in the state policies which outline the information that must be included when services are recommended.

- After the follow-up assessment, another meeting will be held in which the assessment information is reported to you and eligibility for services will be determined.
- Any necessary follow-up services will be discussed with you and written on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) plan. Services on the IEP are also free of charge to families.

If your child has participated in Early Intervention services through the NC Infant-Toddler Program, then the referral to the Preschool Program will be facilitated by your Early Intervention Service Coordinator (EISC).

As the parent of a child who is suspected to need or is identified as needing special education, you have certain rights which are guaranteed by state and federal laws. [The Handbook on Parents Rights](#) reviews this information.